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This is an Advanced Level worksheet and is suitable for children in higher classes.

One hundred years of Indian cinema

India is a country hooked to the movies. You will find a movie hall even in a remote corner of rural India. If you ask a street child struggling for his existence on the pavements of a big city, what is the first thing he does with the money he earns, his reply would be, "I go to watch a movie." Hindi movie songs blare out of FM radios in pan shops and public transport vehicles, dialogues of Hindi movies become a part of our everyday conversation and for better or for worse, movie stars become role models for our youngsters.

Let us celebrate the centenary year of Indian cinema with some interesting activities based on popular films. Let us begin from the pre-history and early history of cinema.

Activity 1: Fact finding

Browse the Internet to get the following information:

1. We all know that the first Indian feature film *Raja Harishchandra*, directed by Dada Saheb Phalke, was released in 1913. In which hall was it released?

2. Who was the producer of *Raja Harishchandra*?

3. How much did it cost to make this film?

4. Which film archivist retrieved the footage of this film and gave recognition to Dada Saheb Phalke as the Father of Indian Cinema?

5. How many films were made in India during the silent era and out of these how many films survive to this date?

6. 2013-2014 is being celebrated as the centenary year of Indian cinema. But the practice of filmmaking started in India as early as 1897. Name two prolific Indian filmmakers who pre-dated Phalke. They made and exhibited numerous short films. One of them even became the manager of Gaiety Theatre in Bombay.



7. The first talkie film in India is *Alam Ara*. In which year was this film made and who was the director? How many songs are there in this film? What is the meaning of 'Alam Ara'?
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8. He had his foundation in *Parsee Theatre* in Bombay. In 1902 he moved to Calcutta and established the *Elphinstone Bioscope Company*. He was also a pioneer in distributing Indian films outside India. Who was he?
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9. If Dada Saheb Phalke made *Raja Harishchandra* in 1913, who made *Satyavadi Raja Harishchandra* in 1917?
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10. The motto of New Theatres, one of the earliest sound studios in India, was *Jivatang Jyotiretu Chhayam*, which means *Light infusing shadows with life*. Who founded this studio and in which year? What was the first film produced by New Theatres?
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Activity 2: Who said what

If you are a movie buff, these dialogues will ring familiar in your ears. All you have to do is, match each dialogue to an actor from the list given below. If you can identify the films in which these dialogues were spoken, you get bonus marks.

(Rajesh Khanna, Deepika Padukone, Shah Rukh Khan, Akshay Kumar, Amitabh Bachhan, Sonakshi Sinha, Nargis Dutt, Sunny Doel, Vidya Balan, Aamir Khan)

1. "I can talk English, I can walk English, I can run English because English is a very funny language."
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2. "Pushpa, I hate tears. Inhe ponch daalo."
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3. "Karm ka dhaga pahanne ke liye ...hum dharm ka dhaga nahin tod sakte."
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4. "Hero marne ke baad swarg jaata hai aur villain jeete jee swarg paata hai."

5. "Bade bade shaharon mein aise chhoti chhoti baten hoti rahti hai."

6. "Main beta de sakti hoon, laaj nahin de sakti."

7. "Interesting!! Ek hi insaan ke do do naam, alag alag pehchaan."

8. "Maar se nahin, pyaar se dar lagta hai"

9. "Kahan se kharidi itni bokwaas dictionary?"

10. "Tarikh par tarikh, tarikh par tarikh, tarikh par tarikh, tarikh par tarikh milti rahti hai ...lekin insaaf nahin mila...mila hai toh sirf yeh tarikh."

Activity 3: Good guys, bad guys

Indian cinema has given its viewers innumerable screen characters, some we idolize and some we love to hate. Some of the screen characters like the 'sacrificing elder brother' or the 'vamp' or the 'jealous mother in-law' are stereotypes. A stereotype is an oversimplified character with predictable and formulaic character traits that are repeated in film after film. Stereotypes are usually black or white, which means, all good or all evil. A more life-like character, on the other hand, is complex and painted in shades of grey with nuanced character traits. Through this activity, let us spend some time with some of the familiar screen characters.

1. From the characters listed below, which ones would you identify as stereotype characters and why? Bhuvan (Lagaan), Bob Biswas (Kahani), Kaveri Amma (Swades), Viru Sahasrabuddhe (3 Idiots), The corrupt minister (Rang De Basanti), Munnabhai (Munnabhai MBBS), Lakshman Pandey (Rang De Basanti), Rahul's mother (Kuch Kuch Hota Hai), Zakir Khan (My Name is Khan), Raj's father Dharamvir Malhotra (Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge), Gabbar Singh (Sholay)



2. Identify two stereotype characters from the movies you have recently watched (not necessarily Hindi films) and write down their character traits.

3. Take any two characters from the list given below and write down three major character traits of these characters. Also describe the actions and dialogues in the respective films that establish these character traits.

Basanti (Hema Malini) in Sholay
Vidya Bagchi (Vidya Balan) in Kahani
Rancho (Aamir Khan) in 3 Idiots
Barfi Johnson (Ranbir Kapoor) in Barfi
Priya Mehra (Priyanka Chopra) in Krish 3

4. Is there any movie character you identify yourself with partly or fully? If so, describe this character.

Activity 4: Those item numbers

Music has always been an integral part of cinema. In the silent era, films used to have live musical accompaniment. After the coming of sound, a distinct genre of films called 'musicals' developed in Hollywood. However, it is only in Indian films, that you have song and dance sequences in movies of every kind. Through these song sequences characters are established, the back story is narrated and the story moves forward. In one of the earliest sound films called *Indrasabha*, there were as many as 71 songs. To add an Indian touch to *Slumdog Millionaire*, Danny Boyle added *Jai Ho* as the concluding sequence. Through this activity, test your knowledge about song and dance sequences of Indian films:

1. In the early sound era, actors used to sing the song themselves on the sets. One such film produced by New Theatres in this era was *Devdas*. Who played the role of Devdas?

2. When did playback singing start in India? Which was the first Indian film to have playback songs?

3. Which famous playback singer directed a film? What was the name of this film?

4. Where was the sequence *Jai Ho* in *Slumdog Millionaire* shot? How long did it take to shoot this sequence?

5. Which song sequence of an Indian film was first shot abroad?

6. There used to be a very popular television programme on *Doordarshan*, based on Hindi film songs. What was the name of this programme? Who hosted this show?

7. Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj ke Khilari* has a dance sequence where the court dancer gives a Kathak performance to Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. Here is a description of the scene:

A room in one of the many palaces of Kaiserbagh complex. Day.

A kathak dancer, Bismillah Jan, is giving a recital for King Wajid, who is surrounded by his usual cohorts. There are "wah wahs" at suitable points and Wajid seems not to have a care in the world.

The dance goes on for a couple of minutes and then Prime Minister Ali Naqu Khan enters. He takes his seat beside Wajid. Wajid gives him a questioning look. It is clear that Ali has something of the gravest importance to convey to the king. Wajid regards his face for a while and waits for the dance to get over. Then he dismisses the entire congregation so that Wajid and Ali are alone.

Ali bursts into tears.

WAJID: What is the matter?

Ali can only shake his head and sob. Wajid finds that irritating.

WAJID: What is this? Pull yourself together.

Ali wipes his tears, but is still shaking with sobs.

WAJID: I know. The Resident Saheb must have been singing ghazals to you. Nothing but poetry and music can bring tears to a man's eyes.

Ali at last controls himself.



WAJID: Now tell me, what the Resident Sahib had to say.
For the first time Ali looks Wajid straight in the eyes. He makes a great effort and says –

Ali: Your majesty, you shall not wear your crown anymore!

After reading the above passage carefully, try and answer the following questions:

i) Write two major character traits of Wajid Ali Shah that come out in this scene.

ii) Every scene in a well scripted film serves a purpose. What, do you think, is the purpose or importance of this scene in the entire film?

iii) Try to visualize this scene and sketch it out.

iv) If possible, procure the movie Shatranj Ke Khilari and watch this scene more than once to check if it tallies with your visualization.

v) There are some interesting elements in the scene that are not mentioned in the script. What are they?

Activity 5: Your opinion

1. Do you think movies should be watched in movie halls and not on the TV or the computer? If so, why? Can you find out the name of the first movie hall established in India?

2. Movies are stories told through moving images and sound. How is telling a story through images different from telling a story in words?

3. Do you think movies should have a message in the end? Write briefly the storyline of an Indian movie you have watched recently and then write in one sentence the message you have got from the movie.

4. Is there any movie whose ending you did not like? If yes, write an alternative ending to this movie.

5. Making a movie is a team effort. The magic works on you only when everybody does his or her bit well. But after a movie is over, we rarely wait to see the end credits scroll. Next time you go to watch a movie in a movie hall, make sure to watch the end credits carefully to find out how many people contribute to the making of a movie.

Prepared by Subha Das Mollick, Secretary, Bichitra Pathshala.

Activity 2: 1) Amitabh Bachchan 2) Rajesh Khanna 3) Amir Khan 4) Akshay Kumar 5) Shah Rukh Khan 6) Nargis Dutt, 7) Vidya Balan 8) Sonakshi Sinha 9) Deepika Padukone 10) Sunny Doel
Activity 4: 1) KL Sehgal 2) 1935. Nitin Bose's film Bhagya Chakra, later remade as Dhoop Chhaon in Hindi. Both produced by New Theatres 3) Kishore Kumar; Chalti Ka Naam Gadi 4) V.T Station in Mumbai, which is now called Chhatrapati Shivaji Station. It took a month 5) Raj Kapoor for his 1964 film Sangam 6) Chitrahhaar hosted by Tabassum

Answers